



# Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church

Southbridge, Massachusetts  
www.stmichaelorthodox.com  
March 2020



## LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

### **Saturday**

9:00am Divine Liturgy  
10:00am Memorial Service  
5pm Vespers

### **Sunday**

9:00am Matins  
10:00am Divine Liturgy

### **Wednesday**

6:00pm Presanctified Liturgy  
(alternating with St. Nicholas  
Albanian church)

## FEAST DAYS

**March 1<sup>st</sup>** – Forgiveness Sunday  
**March 2<sup>nd</sup>** – Clean Monday –  
Beginning of Lent  
**March 7<sup>th</sup>** – St. Theodore the Tyro;  
Memorial Saturday  
**March 8<sup>th</sup>** – Sunday of Orthodoxy  
**March 9<sup>th</sup>** – Holy Forty Martyrs of  
Sebastia  
**March 15<sup>th</sup>** – Sunday of St. Gregory  
Palamas  
**March 22<sup>nd</sup>** – Sunday of the Holy  
Cross  
**March 25<sup>th</sup>** – Annunciation of the  
Theotokos  
**March 29<sup>th</sup>** – Sunday of St. John  
Climacus

## **Annunciation of the Theotokos**

Six months after John the Forerunner's conception, the Archangel Gabriel was sent by God to Nazareth, a town of Galilee, unto Mary the Virgin, who had come forth from the Temple a mature maiden (see Nov. 21). According to the tradition handed down by the Fathers, she had been betrothed to Joseph four months. On coming to Joseph's house, the Archangel declared: "Rejoice, thou Full of Grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." After some consideration, and turmoil of soul, and fear because of this greeting, the Virgin, when she had finally obtained full assurance concerning God's unsearchable condescension and the ineffable dispensation that was to take place through her, and believing that all things are possible to the Most High, answered in humility: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." And at this, the Holy Spirit came upon her, and the power of the Most High overshadowed her all-blameless womb, and the Son and Word of God, Who existed before the ages, was conceived past speech and understanding, and became flesh in her immaculate body (Luke 1:26-38).

Bearing in her womb the Uncontainable One, the blessed Virgin went with haste from Nazareth to the hill country of Judea, where Zacharias had his dwelling; for she desired to find Elizabeth her kinswoman and rejoice together with her, because, as she had learned from the Archangel, Elizabeth had conceived in her old age. Furthermore, she wished to tell her of the great things that the Mighty One had been well-pleased to bring to pass in her, and she greeted Elizabeth and drew nigh to her. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, she felt her six-month-old babe, Saint John the Baptist, prophesied of the dawning of the spiritual Sun. Immediately, the aged Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and recognized her as the Mother of her Lord, and with a great voice blessed her and the Fruit that she held within herself. The Virgin also, moved by a supernatural rejoicing in the spirit, glorified her God and Savior, saying: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour," and the rest, as the divine Luke hath recorded (1:39-55).

**Saint Michael's Romanian Orthodox Church**  
16 Romanian Avenue, Southbridge Massachusetts 01550  
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Email: [stmichaelromanianorthodox@gmail.com](mailto:stmichaelromanianorthodox@gmail.com)

Facebook: St. Michael Orthodox Christian Church

### 2020 Parish Council

President: Luke Yanka  
Vice President: Spiro Thomo  
Secretary: Debby Thomo  
Treasury: Paul Yanka

### 2020 Ladies Society Committee

President: Alexandra Nasto  
Vice President: Louise Boilard  
Secretary: Debbie Thomo  
Treasurer: Mary Andreea

### Clergy

Fr. John Downie [fr.john\\_downie71@yahoo.com](mailto:fr.john_downie71@yahoo.com)

## Parish News & Events

### Coffee Hour Volunteers Needed

We need more volunteers for each Sunday. If you volunteer, you can dedicate the coffee hour to the memory of a loved one. Any help would be greatly appreciated!

**Please contact Deb Thomo to sign up.**

### **Happy Birthday!! God Grant You Many More Years!!**

**March 8<sup>th</sup>** – Destiny Collazo  
**March 10<sup>th</sup>** – Preoteasa Camelia and Susan Brogan  
**March 13<sup>th</sup>** – Tom Andrea and Debbie Yanka  
**March 14<sup>th</sup>** – Nick Thomo  
**March 17<sup>th</sup>** – Ruth Yanka

### Happy Name Day

**March 3<sup>rd</sup>** – St. Christina the Martyr – Kristina Mironidis  
**March 12<sup>th</sup>** – St. Symeon the New Theologian – Symeon Downie



### *Easter Ham Shoot*

Saturday, March 28, 6:30pm

Spaghetti Dinner – 5pm to 6:30pm  
\$7 all you can eat  
Romanian Hall, Southbridge, MA



### *Stewardship Forms*

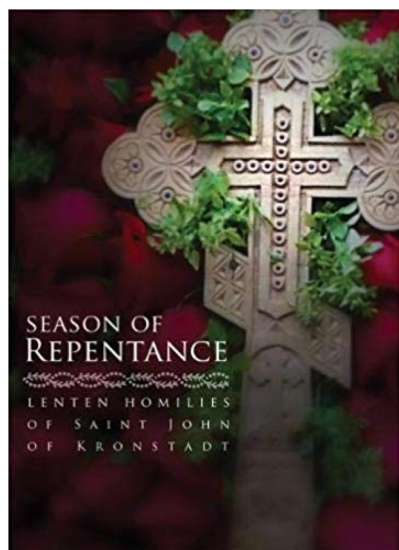
Stewardship forms have been sent out in the mail. Please fill them out and return them to the church in the mail or in the tray on a Sunday.



### Please Pray for:

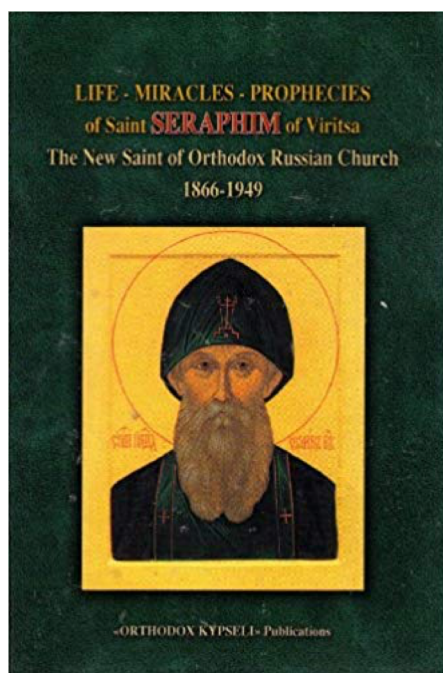
Preoteasa Camelia  
Carol Porra  
Bill & Lauren Smith  
Mary Grabosky  
Henrietta Panu  
Jennifer Silva  
Alexander

## ~ Book Corner ~



### Book: *Season of Repentance*

Each year the journey to the radiant feast of Pascha begins anew, entering the season of repentance known as Great Lent. The homilies presented in this modest volume, from one of the spiritual giants of the Orthodox Church of Russia, can both encourage and inform in this struggle of the Fast. For the first time, a selection of St. John's Lenten sermons is presented in English translation. They follow the thematic structure of the Lenten season in the Orthodox Church, from the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee through to Great and Holy Friday. A sermon for St. Thomas Sunday, which follows Holy Pascha, is offered as an epilogue.



### Book: *Life-Miracles-Prophecies of St. Seraphim of Viritsa*

This book presents the life, miracles, counsels and prophecies of the newly canonized Saint of the Russian Orthodox Church - Saint Seraphim of Viritsa (1866-1949). St. Seraphim carried the heavy cross of eldership during the communist persecution of the Russian Church and World War II. While he is quite well-known in Russia, this may be the first book about this modern saint in English.

**“This was from Me”**  
**A Homily of St. Seraphim of Viritsa (+1949)**

*Saint Seraphim of Viritsa (1866-1949) is one of the about 1200 saints whom the Hierarchical Synod of the Orthodox Church of Russia proclaimed. The synod gathered on 13-16 of August 2000 in the church of Christ the Savior in Moscow.*

*The following text comprises a letter sent by Father Seraphim to a spiritual child of his, a bishop, who was in prison. It is a homily of consolation and counsel that the Creator God addresses to man's soul.*

Have you ever thought that everything that concerns you, concerns Me, also? Things that concern you concern the apple of My eye. You are precious in My eyes (He is speaking of the soul) and I have loved you; for this reason, it is a special joy for Me to train you.

When temptations and the opponent [the Evil One] come upon you like a river, I want you to know that,

**This was from Me.**

I want you to know that your weakness has need of My strength, and your safety lies in allowing Me to protect you.

I want you to know that when you are in difficult conditions, among people who do not understand you, and cast you away,

**This was from Me.**

I am your God, the circumstances of your life are in My hands; you did not end up in your position by chance; this is

precisely the position I have appointed for you.

Weren't you asking Me to teach you humility? And there – I placed you precisely in the “school” where they teach this lesson.

Your environment, and those who are around you, are performing My will. Do you have financial difficulties and can just barely survive? Know that,

**This was from Me.**

I want you to know that I dispose of your money, so take refuge in Me and depend upon Me.

I want you to know that My storehouses are inexhaustible, and I am faithful in My promises.

Let it never happen that they tell you in your need, “Do not believe in your Lord and God.”

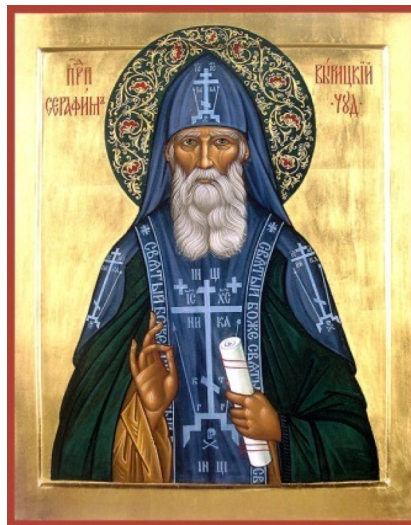
Have you ever spent the night in suffering? Are you separated from your relatives, from those you love?

I allowed this that you would turn to Me, and in Me find consolation and comfort. Did your friend or someone to whom you opened your heart, deceive you?

**This was from Me.**

I allowed this frustration to touch you so that you would learn that your best friend is the Lord.

I want you to bring everything to Me and tell Me everything.



Did someone slander you? Leave it to Me; be attached to Me so that you can hide from the “contradiction of the nations.”

I will make your righteousness shine like light and your life like midday noon. Your plans were destroyed?

Your soul yielded and you are exhausted?

**This was from Me.**

You made plans and have your own goals; you brought them to Me to bless them.

But I want you to leave it all to Me, to direct and guide the circumstances of your life by My hand, because you are the orphan, not the protagonist. Unexpected failures found you and despair overcame your heart, but know,

**That this was from Me.**

With tiredness and anxiety I am testing how strong your faith is in My promises and your boldness in prayer for your relatives.

Why is it not you who entrusted their cares to My providential love? You must leave them to the protection of My All Pure Mother. Serious illness found you, which may be healed or may be incurable, and has nailed you to your bed.

**This was from Me.**

Because I want you to know Me more deeply, through physical ailment, do not murmur against this trial I have sent you.

And do not try to understand My plans for the salvation of people’s souls, but uncomplainingly and humbly bow your head before My goodness. You were dreaming about doing something special

for Me and, instead of doing it, you fell into a bed of pain.

**This was from Me.**

Because then you were sunk in your own works and plans and I wouldn’t have been able to draw your thoughts to Me,

But I want to teach you the most deep thoughts and My lessons, so that you may serve Me.

I want to teach you that you are nothing without Me.

Some of my best children are those who, cut off from an active life, learn to use the weapon of ceaseless prayer.

You were called unexpectedly to undertake a difficult and responsible position, supported by Me.

I have given you these difficulties and as the Lord God I will bless all your works, in all your paths. In everything I, your Lord, will be your guide and teacher. Remember always that every difficulty you come across, every offensive word, every slander and criticism, every obstacle to your works, which could cause frustration and disappointment,

**This is from Me.**

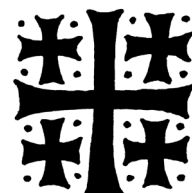
Know and remember always, no matter where you are,

That whatsoever hurts will be dulled as soon as you learn

In all things, to look at Me.

Everything has been sent to you by Me, for the perfection of your soul.

**All these things were from Me.**



## The Orthodox Truth about Asceticism

### Archimandrite Cyril Kostopoulos

We all know that to the question "to whom belongs the work of asceticism?" the response is as follows: "To ascetics." However, can such an answer be justified by Orthodox Theology?

To answer the above question truthfully, we need to consider the fall of the first man, the grief of the fall, and the endless existential joy of the Resurrection.

Asceticism is essentially experiencing and overcoming this grief with the light of the hope of the Resurrection.

***"When a faithful Christian avoids food and comfort...they enter into the realm of ecclesiastical asceticism, which purifies the heart and leads them into communion with God their Creator and their fellow human beings."***

Fasting, affliction, prayer, participating in the sacramental life of our Church, and generally all deprivations and tribulations in the life of a pious member of our Church is asceticism with an eschatological meaning.

This is because the journey of asceticism takes us in the opposite direction of the fall. Through asceticism the eros for the world and sins are converted into eros for God. Basil the Great says: "The asceticism of a pious soul nourishes divine thoughts" (PG 32, 225C-D).

When a faithful Christian avoids food and comfort, which produce insensitivity, hardness of the heart and callousness, they enter into the realm of ecclesiastical asceticism, which purifies the heart and leads them into communion with God their Creator and their fellow human beings.

How comforting this sounds in the current state of deprivation and poverty!

The material body participates in one's sanctification. For this reason asceticism restores us to what we have been called to, namely to become a purified image of God.

We need to understand that asceticism is an ecclesiastical and not an individual practice. Through it individual existence is altered into a personal event of communion with God and with our fellow human beings. For example, ecclesiastical fasting alters our instinctive need for food, our

ravenous hunger for individualistic self-preservation, and subordinates it to the common will and purpose of the Orthodox Church to obey the will of God and society.

However, it should be stressed that an Orthodox Christian does not fast to destroy the body - which is why the rules of fasting state that we should not fast "when sick" (Apostolic Canon 62) - nor because we accept the view of "clean" and "unclean" foods. We fast because through this exercise we stop the individual intake of food and we alter our obedience to the common will and common practice of the Church. However, this obedience to the Church is absolutely voluntary. Therefore, it is always an act of communion. By this obedience society lovingly and voluntarily communes with their Creator God.

According to the aforementioned example of fasting we could talk about other forms of ecclesiastical asceticism. For example, the temperance of sexual desire, participation in prayer, prostrations, all of which were established by the monastic tradition, including acts of obedience, the refusal of our individual will, acts of philanthropy, participating in the Divine Mysteries, etc. All these ascetic acts are forms of the resistance to our egocentric individuality, particularly of people today. They are forms of a struggle to overcome our biological nature, which contradicts our spiritual nature. As a result we are able, with these ecclesiastical exercises, to complete our communion with God and our fellow human beings.

In conclusion, we must emphasize that asceticism does not constitute a deprivation of the good things of life, hostility to the body or a disdain towards matter, as some worshipers of the flesh maintain. Asceticism is the journey of a struggling believer towards their personal fulfillment of restoring their pre-fallen beauty, a fall which tarnished the image of God, which is man.

- *Translated by John Sanidopoulos*



### **What is a Priest? An Orthodox Statement (Part 4) Fr. Thomas Hopko (+2015)**

With such a sacramental vocation, the qualifications for being a priest in Christ's Church are not reducible to any purely human talents or skills. The priest must teach, but he need not be a theologian. He must preach, but rhetorical eloquence is not a necessity. He must shepherd the flock, but he need not be a specialist in pastoral counseling. He must administer, but purely executive gifts may belong to another. Of course he must pray, but the

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particular charism of prayer is not a requirement. The qualifications which a priest must necessarily possess are traditionally external rather than internal. His specific charisms may vary, but his objective image must be vivid and firm. He must be a male member of the Church, physically whole, totally identified with the faith of the Church and professing it soundly and clearly. He must be of spotless reputation to those inside and outside the Church. He must have no record of grave sin after baptism, specifically including the shedding of blood, sexual immorality, or public deceit. He must be the husband of one wife or a celibate virgin. If he is married, the wife and children within his household must be members of the Church with similar qualifications. He must not be involved in political,

economic, or military affairs or in any secular business; nor can his wife. His individual talents and gifts must be such that they do not conflict with his sacramental being and life.

Thus, for example, should he feel called to a life of social activity, government service, monastic contemplation, or legal advocacy; or should he feel compelled to take a second wife, to join the military, to pursue an academic career, or to propagate one or another specific form of Christian activity or piety, he must give up his sacramental office. In a word, the ordained priest is a sacramental image, an animate symbol, a living sign and expression of Christ in whom dwells bodily all the fullness of God. He is not necessarily the bearer of specific gifts, the most gifts, or the best gifts. He is not the holiest member of the Church. He is not the one who takes the faith most seriously. He certainly is not the one who has a “religious vocation.” Every human being has a “religious vocation” simply because every human being is made in the image and likeness of God, as an Adam or as an Eve. And there is no doubt that most human beings are more talented and more skilled in one or another specific way than is the priest. Certainly many members of the Church are personally more holy, including repentant sinners, handicapped persons, people twice married, and those who bear the humanity of Eve.

But this is beside the point. There is not some sort of “competition” between the bishops and presbyters in the Church and the rest of the members on the basis of talents, gifts, or personal sanctity. For the priesthood is not a profession, a job, or a way of self-fulfillment in personal

holiness. It is a sacrament of the Church, in and for the Church, of him who is the Church’s only pastor and priest, its head and its husband, the Lord Jesus Christ, Of course all will agree that the bearer of this sacrament should be holy and talented. But the holiness and the gifts are included within the sacrament, and the sacrament is not dependent on the sanctity and skills of its bearer. For this reason no person can claim the office of priesthood on the basis of professional qualifications or personal holiness. The priest is called by God with the consent of the faithful in ways known to himself. Some may force their way into the office for one reason or other, but this is a violation of the sacrament undertaken unto condemnation and judgment. For the priest is called and chosen by God as the sacramental guarantee of the continuity and identity, the purity and integrity, of the body and bride of his Son until he comes again in glory to establish his kingdom in which there will be no sacraments, for then he will be all and in all.





## Fasting Recipe Stuffed Peppers

### Ingredients

- 6-8 medium bell peppers (8 medium or 6 large) in any combination of green/yellow/red
- 1 cup onion finely chopped
- 1/3 cup garlic finely minced
- 1/2 cup olive oil
- 1 cup white rice (uncooked)
- 1/4 cup fresh chopped mint
- 1/4 cup fresh chopped dill
- 1 cup chopped, peeled tomatoes (4-5 canned, peeled plum tomatoes, drained)
- 2 cups water
- 1 1/2 tsp salt and 1 1/2 tsp freshly ground pepper
- 1/2 cup warm water for pan

### Cooking Instructions

Sauté finely chopped onions, then garlic in olive oil on low heat until soft and translucent. Add rice, herbs, spices and tomatoes. Stir to combine completely. Cook on low for 5 minutes, stirring often.

Add water, cover and cook on low heat for 15 minutes. Make sure heat is low or rice mixture will stick to pan. Remove from heat, uncover, stir and allow to sit for at least 10 minutes before filling. Rice should be almost completely cooked.

At this stage, you can keep filling covered in the refrigerator for up to 3 days until you're ready to stuff your peppers. When ready to use, allow filling to sit out for about 30 minutes and come to room temperature.

Cut off the tops of peppers and set aside. Remove seeds and veins and arrange in a pan which fits them tightly. For 5 or six medium sized

peppers I usually use a 9 inch round cake pan. For anywhere from 9-12 peppers, I use my 9×13" cake pan.

Fill each pepper with rice mixture, almost to the top. Add 2 tsp of warm water over the top of each filled pepper. Replace pepper lids and carefully brush tops and sides of filled peppers with olive oil. Add 1 cup of warm water to bottom of the pan.

Bake at 375 degrees for 1 1/2 hrs. Yellow and orange bell peppers can be a bit thicker skinned and may need another 15 minutes or so. Rice will be soft and tops of peppers just slightly charred.

A piece of crusty bread and you've got a fantastic meal!



# March 2020

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>1</b> + Fast Day – No meat  Forgiveness Sunday  Matins 9:00am  Divine Liturgy 10:00am	<b>2</b> + Strict Fast  Clean Monday – First Day of Lent  Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete 6:00pm	<b>3</b> + Strict Fast  Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete 6:00pm	<b>4</b> + Strict Fast  Presanctified Liturgy (St. Michael's) 6:00pm  Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete 8:30pm	<b>5</b> + Strict Fast  Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete 6:00pm	<b>6</b> + Strict Fast	<b>7</b> + Fast Day – Wine and oil allowed St. Theodore the Tyro; Memorial Saturday  Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers, Litia 5:00pm
<b>8</b> + Fast Day – Wine and oil allowed  Sunday of Orthodoxy  Matins 9:00am  Divine Liturgy 10:00am	<b>9</b> + Strict Fast  Holy Forty Martyrs of Sebastia	<b>10</b> + Strict Fast	<b>11</b> + Strict Fast  Presanctified Liturgy (St. Michael's) 6:00pm	<b>12</b> + Strict Fast	<b>13</b> + Strict Fast	<b>14</b> + Fast Day – Wine and oil allowed  Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers 5:00pm
<b>15</b> + Fast Day – Wine and oil allowed  Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas  Matins 9:00am  Divine Liturgy 10:00am	<b>16</b> + Strict Fast	<b>17</b> + Strict Fast	<b>18</b> + Strict Fast  Presanctified Liturgy (St. Nicholas Albanian Church) 6:00pm	<b>19</b> + Strict Fast	<b>20</b> + Strict Fast	<b>21</b> + Fast Day – Wine and oil allowed  Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers 5:00pm
<b>22</b> + Fast Day – Wine and oil allowed  Sunday of the Holy Cross  Matins 9:00am  Divine Liturgy 10:00am	<b>23</b> + Strict Fast	<b>24</b> + Strict Fast  Vespers, Litia, Matins - Annunciation 6:00pm	<b>25</b> + Fast Day – Fish allowed  Annunciation of the Theotokos  Divine Liturgy (St. Michael's) 10:00am	<b>26</b> + Strict Fast	<b>27</b> + Strict Fast	<b>28</b> + Fast Day – Wine and oil allowed  Saturday of the Souls  Divine Liturgy 9:00am (Memorial Service following Liturgy 10:00am) Vespers 5:00pm
<b>29</b> + Fast Day – Wine and oil allowed Sunday of St. John Climacus  Matins 9:00am  Divine Liturgy 10:00am	<b>30</b> + Strict Fast	<b>31</b> + Strict Fast				